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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OPRC, KMDR, KIRF, KPAO, PGOV, PHUM, PREL, PTER, KPAO,
 XF, IZ, KU, TIP, TERRORISM

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS, HUMAN
 RIGHTS, AND GUANTANAMO

Summary

1. Kuwaiti Arabic-language press responded unfavorably to the November 9 roundtable discussion the Ambassador held on the topic of trafficking in persons, with the exception of one Kuwait University political science professor, who thanked the Ambassador in Al-Seyassah. Al-Rai Al-Aam dedicated an entire page to reactions by members of the National Assembly. End summary.

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----- Selected Headlines -----

2. Sunday, November 13, 2005

-- Al-Rai Al-Aam front page:

"Independent Salem Al-Hammad called on him not to mix matters and Bader Al-Farsi sees Kuwait as spoiling expatriate labor. Islamist MP Waled Al-Tabtabaei: The American Ambassador interferes in our affairs. Islamist Faisal Al-Musallam: I resent his repeated inappropriate interference but I agree with him"

-- Al-Rai Al-Aam p. 8:

"We do not deny the lack of legislature and those trading in residency visas must be combated; LeBaron's interference is unacceptable. MPs and political activists answer the criticisms of the American Ambassador and the predictions of James Zogby: Kuwait cares for expatriate labor rights and the Gulf region will not witness disturbances like France," "Labor laws are very old and must be reviewed. We must change the sponsorship system;" "The government is weak against residency visa traders. We want to expedite the establishment of labor cities," "If Ambassador LeBaron places Kuwait in the third category then the U.S. is in the last;" "Kuwait is a state of law and spoils expatriate labor at the expense of its citizens. We are currently studying new legislation;" "Kuwait is badmouthed. We lend a helping hand to countries and we only receive offense;" "We admit to problems with expatriate workers in the Gulf region but they will not resort to violence;" "Every worker whose rights are violated should resort to legal channels and workers in the Gulf region do not feel that they are treated unjustly;" "There are companies that embarrass Kuwait in human rights organizations' reports;" "We do not dismiss the possibility of violence in the Gulf because of certain prejudices that citizens experience for sectarian reasons."

----- Block Quotes -----

3. Monday, November 14, 2005

-- Musaid Adel Al-Zafiri wrote for moderate Al-Watan under the title "America and its violations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:" "'Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts

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which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear.'

The preamble of the United Nations General Assembly Universal Declaration of Human Rights begins with this wonderful statement. The United States is a signatory to the declaration yet it has not only disregarded human rights, it has trampled them by establishing and maintaining the Guantanamo Bay prison facility. The world is now criticizing the United States for its barbarism and inhumanity, except of course our liberal brothers here in Kuwait who do not see, or hear, or feel."

-- Aziza Al-Mufrij also wrote for moderate Al-Watan under the title "Excuse me, Mr. LeBaron, but:" "We are a small country that has been invaded and you, a big country,

liberated us because according to your rhetoric you will not allow the strong to swallow the weak. Your rhetoric may not be correct and may only be the result of a mutual interest at the time. That is unimportant to us. What is important to us is that you greatly contributed to the return of our country and our sovereignty to us. We appreciate it greatly and hold it dear to our hearts. However, we must say that you are wrong when you infringe upon our rights and serve our small country an injustice. You constantly accuse our people of abusing expatriate and domestic labor. If you were to conduct an honest study, Mr. LeBaron, you would find that not a single household has not suffered a crime or crimes on the part of the laborers. Despite this, they are sent to their home countries onboard Kuwaiti Airlines at the sponsor's expense after having stolen his property and violated his honor. When a person goes to a country to be an Ambassador, he should be aware of the traditions of the host country. The Kuwaiti people fear God, Mr. LeBaron, and conduct themselves accordingly.. I do not speak of a few business owners who trade in expatriate labor as you have similar criminal organizations in the United States. I also do not speak of those sick individuals who torture their domestic workers because in American you have sadistic employers that enjoy torturing others. Mr. LeBaron, I speak of the majority of the simple Kuwaiti people who are unable to give up their domestic workers despite all the trouble that comes to them as a result. We, Mr. LeBaron, are the ones in need of human rights and studies showing how much we have lost as a result of being so dependent upon them. As for humans and their rights, what is your opinion as an American of giving those detained without charges brought against them or trying them their rights, and freeing them

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from injustice rather than picking on poor people."

-- Liberal Professor of Political Science at Kuwait University Dr. Shamlan Al-Issa wrote in pro-government Al-Seyassah under the title "America's hostility, in whose interest?;" "We thank the Ambassador of the United States of America to Kuwait Richard LeBaron for his comments on expatriate labor in which he expressed his appreciation for the steps finally taken by the Kuwait government to combat trafficking in persons and the abuse of expatriate labor. He praised the laws passed to improve their conditions and he reiterated the importance of enforcing the laws and punishing those who do not comply. What enraged the Islamist in the National Council was the fact that Kuwait will remain a tier-three country until the new laws are enforced. It was strange for the Islamists in the National Council to attack the Ambassador's comments rather than thank him for his advice. They attacked American domestic affairs by highlighting the mistreatment of minorities in the U.S. The real purpose of their attack was political only, to protest against the Guantanamo Bay prison and other secret prisons in Eastern Europe. What the Ambassador said was nothing new. These ideas have been around for years, but have not seen the light as a result of mismanagement, delays, and the presence of corruption in the National Council, which refuses to accept reform under the guise of values and traditions and in the name of interference in our domestic affairs."

-- Dina Al-Issa wrote for moderate Al-Watan under the title "Their rights and our rights?:" "Here in Kuwait, some foreigners do have more rights than the citizens themselves. Do you remember how many times the domestic labor has caused harm to Kuwaiti families in cases that reached the level of murder, robbery, poisoning and beating of children and sexual harassment? Do you remember how many times maids have escaped from the residences of their employers during their summer vacation in Europe without the Kuwaiti sponsor being able to complain.? Do you remember how many cases of adultery in which maids were involved were reported? After all this, the Kuwaiti sponsor has to book a ticket to deport the maid. We should not forget that there are five nationalities that have the right to seek the help of their embassies in the event of being implicated in a case, even if they are defendants. You only have to remember -- if you

want to get back a Filipino maid who has sought shelter in her embassy that you have to be sure that you master all kinds of martial arts in order to be able to defend yourself

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against any expected beating at the embassy. This is only part of the problems we face with domestic labor in Kuwait."

Visit Embassy Kuwait's Classified Website:

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait>

You can also access this site through the State Department's Classified SIPRNET website

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